

## Fries Train Station Federal Funding Announcement (August 17, 2005)

Fries, Virginia

It is my pleasure to announce today that the U.S. Congress has agreed to my request to provide a significant award of federal funding which will support the rapidly developing tourism economy of the Town of Fries.

As a key component of our regional economic development strategy, we are placing a major emphasis on expanding tourism. It holds great promise for our region. It is our greatest untapped economic resource.

A shining example of our region's tourism potential can be found here in the Town of Fries. Located adjacent to the scenic New River and the New River Trail State Park, numerous tourists pass through the Town each year as they take in the spectacular views of the New River along the Trail. It is now time for the Town of Fries to capitalize on this convenient location and the significant historic and cultural sites here to draw more visitors to the Town. This strategy represents a promising new avenue for economic development in Fries.

In an effort to encourage new tourism development here, in 2004 I submitted a request for federal funding to reconstruct the former Fries train depot which was located adjacent to the rail bed that is now part of the New River Trail. Today, I am pleased to announce that the Congress has honored my request and has appropriated \$800,000 in federal funding for the Fries Train Station project. The federal funding was included in highway legislation which was signed into law by the President just last week.

The federal funding which I have obtained for the Town of Fries will be used to launch the initiative to resurrect the old train station. The building will be constructed on the property of the former train station which is adjacent to the New River and the New River Trail, and the architecture will be in keeping with the original structure.

Once reconstructed, the facility will serve as a visitors' center which will provide information on the New River Trail and other recreational and cultural offerings of Fries and the nearby Twin County communities. The new facility will attract many more visitors each year to the Fries portion of the Trail and will serve as a focal point for tourists seeking to learn about what the county has to offer. The federal funding will also be used to design and construct a new outdoor trail near the reconstructed train station which will complement the existing New River Trail.

Our announcement today is a major step in encouraging new tourism development within the Town of Fries. I would like to take the opportunity of these remarks to provide information regarding another tourism development project which is receiving federal funding.

Federal monies totaling \$180,000 were recently approved to support the development of the riverbank area in the Town which is adjacent to the New River State Park. Located very near the Fries train depot site, the riverbank area will be transformed to house a wide variety of amenities which will not only benefit the residents of Fries but also serve as a further tourist attraction for visitors.

Using the federal funding and local matching funds which will be provided by the Commonwealth of Virginia, an amphitheater, boat launch and new picnic area will be constructed along the riverbanks of the New River. In addition, a birding tower will be erected and a paved walking trail will be constructed at Scout Island. A new camping area will also be established, and the tennis courts will be refurbished.

The Town of Fries possesses many unique natural, historical and cultural qualities which would be of interest to tourists who visit our region. I am pleased that the federal government is investing appropriately in the development of these treasures. However, our work here is just beginning. As these and other projects take shape, I will be seeking the appropriate federal resources to ensure that the Town of Fries receives the assistance that is necessary to further develop its tourism economy.

I want to express my great appreciation to the leaders of the Town of Fries, including the members of the Town Council and retiring Mayor Carolyn Jones, for their vision in recognizing the potential that tourism holds for economic development in Fries. I look forward to working with incoming Mayor Kenny Brooms on these and future tourism development projects.

Today we celebrate the opening of a new door to economic opportunity for the Town of Fries. I look forward to continuing my work with you as we establish the Town as a major Southwest Virginia tourism destination.